

WUU CREATION STORY

by Reverend Jennifer Ryu

Charter Sunday, February 3, 2008

Once again, here we gather -- this morning, in order to commemorate the birth of this congregation. We celebrate February 5th 1989 as the day a group of people came together to declare themselves a spiritual community. It was a cold, icy day, but despite the winter storm, more than a hundred people came to the auditorium in the Williamsburg Library. When it was time to be counted among those who would become members, nearly everyone rose to their feet.

That morning, 89 people sign the membership book, joined by 10 others later that week, when the ice melted. These 99 members set a record among UU congregations nationwide for chartering. One of those people was Joan Cone, whose life we honored at yesterday's memorial service.

Of course, no event in history stands alone. That Charter Sunday was preceded by one chain of events and it set in motion another.

Two years of planning and dreaming came before Charter Sunday. Starting in Linda Lane Hamilton and David Hamilton's living room, a small group of UUs organized their first public meeting. Eighty people came. The events that came after the first Charter Sunday have established a liberal religious presence in Williamsburg that will flourish for many decades to come. Just three months after Charter Sunday, another small group of UUs known as the Ironbound Partners purchased this land in preparation to build a church. Five years later, the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists dedicated this building.

And so today, we celebrate our 19th Charter Sunday, standing here as a link between the past and our future.

We remember those first 99 people who poured their hearts into the growth of this church. Of those 99 people, some have passed from this life. Others have moved away or found different paths to travel. Happily, some are here with us this morning. If you are a charter member, will you please stand now and let us thank you. [APPLAUSE]

In those early days, a conversation began about creating a symbol for the new congregation. They wanted a symbol that would appeal to both mind and senses -- an icon of for community, a way to mark the passage of our years together. In 1991, Pat Winter created the spiral sculpture that stands in our sanctuary today, and John Bensel built the stand for it. Pat, will you tell that story now?